"The New-found Land..."

1583 *1949*

A

POSTAL HISTORY

by Nicholas Dodd

86-05339/

"The Newfoundland" 1583-1949

A Postal History

by Nicholas Dodd

on behalf of the
National Postal Museum
and the
Newfoundland Provincial
Government

July 1983

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"The Newfoundland"

Basque fishermen of the 17th century are reputed to be the earliest visitors to Newfoundland calling it Baccalaos after the fish nearby. It is known that the Vikings landed on the Island and called it Markland after all the forests. There was a Viking settlement in Northern Newfoundland circa 1000 AD. Labrador, or Helluland as it was called, was also known to these early sailors and there appears to be trade along the Labrador-Greenland-Iceland-Norway route at this time.

Contact between Newfoundland and Europe continued at least until the 1350's, but it remained tenuous. However in 1497 Cabot, with a charter from Henry VII, 'discovered' Newfoundland and the Grand fishing Banks. He also found that the Newfound land was inhabited by Indians, the Beothuks.

The fish were the attraction for Europeans and even as early as 1527, John Rut was to find fourteen fishing vessels in St Johns harbour. This was by no means exceptional. In 1583 Sir Humphrey Gilbert took possession of St Johns for himself and the English Crown.

The value of the fishing trade to Bristol and other European sea ports led to tight laws to restrict and restrain the establishment of colonies on Newfoundland to prevent the emergence of a rival fishing industry.

Thus, despite Guys ill-fated colonising efforts in 1610, Newfoundland remained the domain of the dwindling Beothuk Indians, and of a mostly destitute population of 'illegal' and harassed settlers, until the European wars of the 18th century.

These wars prompted various States to seek to capture the Grand Banks and secure a base on the Newfoundland coast. Britain was forced to defend its 'right' to the territory by garrisoning St Johns, condoning immigration and recognising the rights of the settlers already there.

The more serious British attitude led to the end of the rule of the powerful fishing captains by the institution of Naval Governors in 1729. This change was the first step to making Newfoundland a colony, although the Governor was not a permanent resident until 1817. Summer factories and trading stations appeared, and permanent settlements grew as trade started with other ports of the Americas. To help in this process and to provide commercial intelligence for the fisheries, a packet service was recommended, and Navigation laws and proper Customs established.

The first trapping of local administration appeared, including a legal system. People started arriving in larger numbers and the local fishing trade challenged the Bristol Merchants. The rise in Newfoundland's commerce and the development of St Johns persuaded the British Post Office to allow a local Post Office in St Johns in 1805. At the same time the Napoleonic war forced the Government to over-ride the Merchants and to establish Newfoundland as a bone-fide colony.

Humphrey Gilbert is here depicted (rather romantically) landing in St Johns to claim the land for the crown.

Sir Humphrey Gilbert's *letter written from* Newfoundland *to* Sir George Peckham

Sir George, *I departed from* Plymouth *on the eleventh of June with five sailes, and on the thirteenth the Barke* Rawley *ran from me in faire and cleere weather, having a large winde. I pray you solicite my brother* Rawley (Raleigh) *to make them an example of all Knaves. On the third of August wee arrived at a Port called Saint* Johns, *and will put to the Seas from thence (God willing) so soone as our ships will be ready.*

Of the New-found Land *I will say nothing, until my next Letters. Be of good cheare, for if there were no better expectation, it were a very rich demaynes, the Country being very good and full of all sorts of victuall, as fish both of the fresh water and Sea-fish, Deere, Pheasants, Partridges, Swannes, and divers Fowles else. I am in haste, you shall be every Messenger heare more at large.*

On the fifth of Auuust, I entered here in the right of the Crowne of England; *and have engraven the Armes of* England, *divers* Spaniards, Portugals, *and other strangers, witnessing the same. I can stay no longer; fare you well with my good Lady: and be of good cheare, for I have comforted my selfe, answerable to all my hopes. From* Saint Johns *in the* New-found Land, *the* 8. *of August,* 1583.

Yours wholly to command, no man more
Hum. Gilbert
Imen

This letter written by Humphrey Gilbert describes his arrival in St Johns, Newfoundland.

The Post Begins

The establishment of a Post Office in 1805 was one of a number of improvements in the administration of the Island. By 1812 Britain had finally recognised the Island as a Colony, and moves had begun to gain autonomy which reached fruition by 1832 when the propertied men elected a House of Assembly.

The population continued to increase and settlements spread around the Island; education and literacy began to improve; and the legal system was reformed. The economy became more varied with the start of the commercial seal and animal fur trades, and with the supremacy of the indigenous fishing industry over the British Merchants. The quality of life rose, especially amongst the well-to-do. St Johns changed rapidly from a fishing port to a national city. These improvements had a beneficial effect on the Post Office and created a market for postal services.

Representative Government proved not to be the panacea for the Newfoundland problems, and the population continued to be ravaged by disease; the towns consumed by fire and the political scene riven with bitter sectarian feuds. The inadequate nature of the new Governmental institutions and the basic and innate weakness of the Newfoundland economy caused much of the strife. Not until 'responsible' Government was established in 1855 did some of these problems decline.

The Post Office, until now purely a local arrangement with private packet masters, was accepted into the Imperial postal system in 1840. It was subsequently overseen by London until it

was in a position to assume an independent role within the Postal Act of 1851. This put the administration of the system into the hands of the Newfoundland Government, and created a proper postal system, with post routes, couriers, regular packet boats and standardised payments. Solomon became the first Postmaster General and had the unenviable task of seeing that the Postal Act was carried out.

The swift growth of the Post Office, once established and functioning, was a reflection of the need amongst the population for communication and transportation. In 1857 the first stamps were issued. However, ten bleak years of the 1860's held back development and the Government could not expand the postal system properly until the return of prosperity in 1870.

The panoramic picture of St Johns c. 1830 shows a bustling and prosperous town. Water front businesses have all but taken over from the traditional fishing flakes (drying rooms).

NOTICE

December 26th 1817

"The subscriber informs the public that he has taken the shop lately occupied by Mr. Thomas Phipard, watch-maker where matters relating to the Post Office will for the present be transacted."

"Simon Solomon, Postmaster, who after a residence of upward of 25 years in this town, had the misfortune of being burnt out on the evening of the 7th November last, by which he lost the fruit of his industry since first coming here."

"He also intends carrying on his business of clock and watch-maker in the above shop, and solicits the commands of the general public in that line, assuring them nothing on his part shall be wanting to give satisfaction to those who may favour him with their custom."

Simon Solomon

S. Solomon was the first Post Master of St Johns, appointed by the Governor, and responsible for the official mail. His postal duties expanded steadily, but in 1817, his house was burnt and his jewellery business went bankrupt. Fortunately the Post Office kept him in reasonable comfort.

As S. Solomon assumed greater postal power in St Johns he carved himself a handstamp so that letters could be identified as having been through the Post Office. A cover is shown of 1827.

In 1840 the British Post Office accepted Newfoundland as a member of the colonial postal system and sent the handstamp recorded.

(No. 1.)

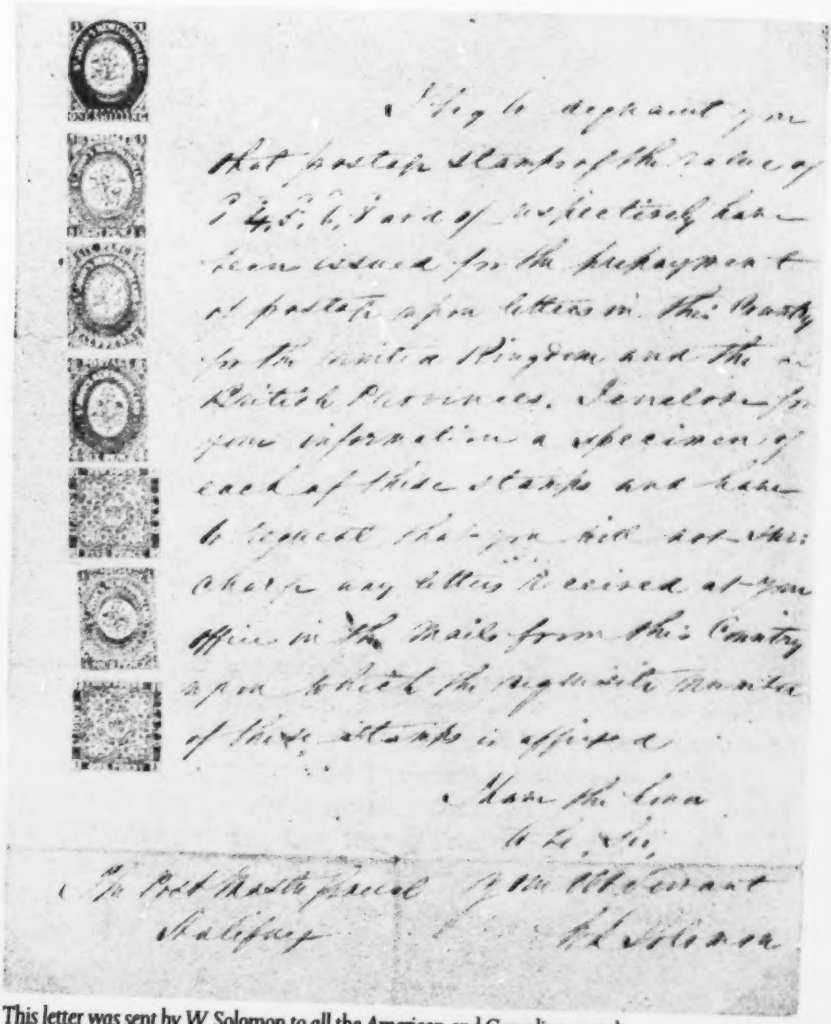
RETURN SHEWING THE NUMBER OF CONTRACTS ENTERED INTO, ALSO THE NUMBER OF MAIL ROUTES AND THE ANNUAL EXPENDITURE OF THE SAME

Number of Mail Routes	No. of Contractors	Annual Amount of Contracts
Between St. John's and Portugal Cove by coach	Robert Oke	£5 0 0
" Portugal Cove and Carbonear by boat	James Doyle	60 0 0
" Portugal Cove and Harbour Grace by boat	Andrew Drysdale	60 0 0
" Portugal Cove and Brigus by boat	William Antle	60 0 0
" St. John's and Carbonear (and intermediate places) during winter months over land by foot messengers	Andrew Drysdale	60 0 0
" Carbonear and New Perlican	Daniel Sullivan	13 0 0
" New Perlican and Trinity by boat, £100, between Trinity and Bonavista by Messenger £20	John Coleman	120 0 0
" Trinity and King's Cove by messenger	James Martin	15 12 0
" St. John's and Ferryland by messenger	Patrick Ryan	30 0 0
" Ferryland and Trepassey by messenger	Philip Jackman	37 0 0
" St. John's and Salmonier by messenger	Walter Shelley	20 0 0
" Salmonier and Placentia by messenger	Thomas Rielley	20 0 0
" Salmonier and St. Mary's by messenger	William Peddle	12 15 0
" Placentia and Burin by boat	Nicholls Coady	120 0 0
" Burin and Garnish, and Garnish to Harbour Britain and Beloram		60 0 0
" St. John's, Greenspond, Fogo and Twillingate by boat	Thomas Coyle	100 0 0
		£793 7 0

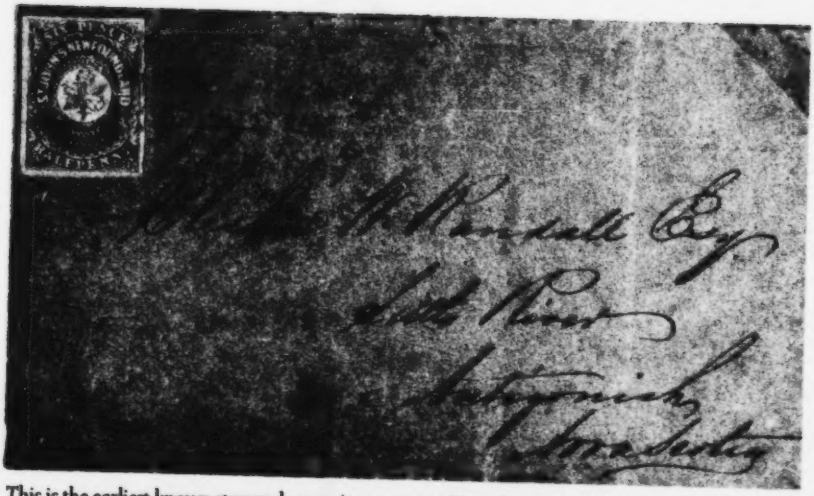
W. L. SOLOMON.

This table shows the first official list of postal contracts following the Postal Act of 1851.

This is a whole sheet of the first issue of stamps in 1857. It shows the 8d scarlet-vermilion.



This letter was sent by W. Solomon to all the American and Canadian postal departments showing them what the first issue of Newfoundland stamps were like. The 3d is missing because it was solely for internal use, and the 2d had still not left the printers.



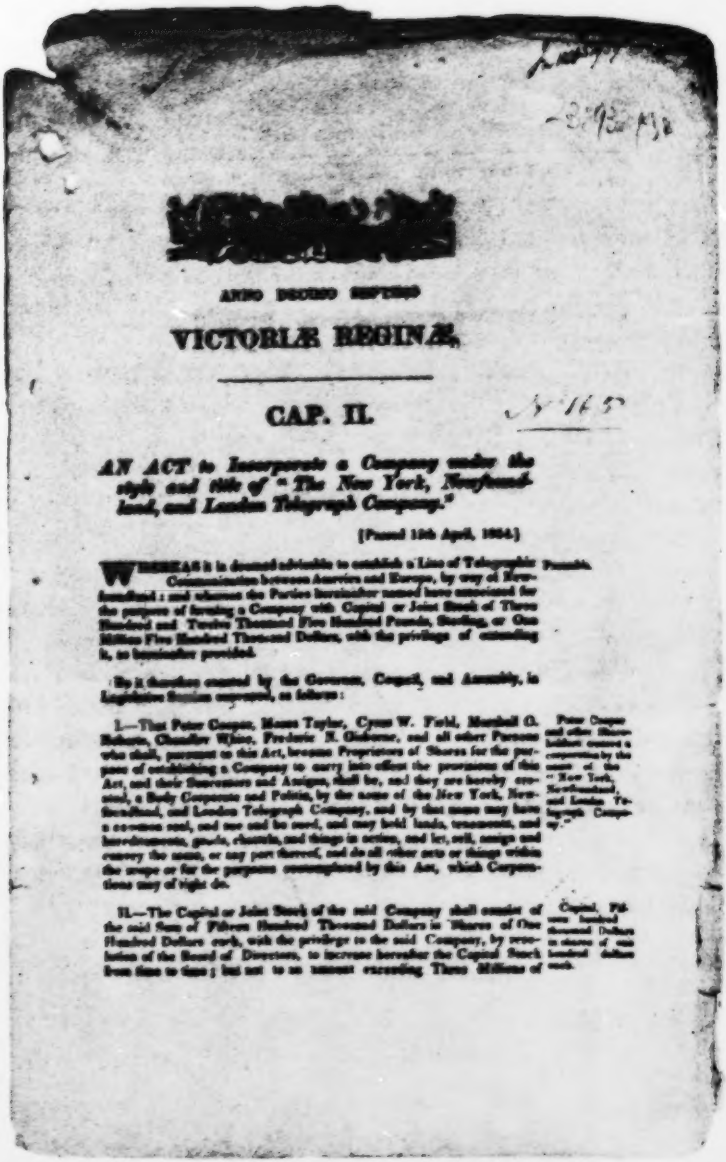
This is the earliest known stamped cover; it was sent to Nova Scotia in 1857.

Telegraphs

The first telegraph cable to be laid under the sea was between England and France in 1851. From then, submarine cables extended rapidly. In 1852 a line was laid betwen Carbonear and St Johns, with the intention of later extending it further-a-field. Despite setbacks, a trans-insular line joining St Johns to Cape Bay, and a submarine cable extension to Canso on mainland Canada, were finished by 1856. This was a major step forward and one necessary for any trans-atlantic cable connection. Plans were already advanced by 1854 to cross the Atlantic, but until 1858 ships used interceptor boats at the eastern tip of the Avalon peninsular to relay messages to, or receive late news from, the American mainland.

In 1858, the New York, Newfoundland and London Telegraph Company successfully laid a cable to Bay Bulls Arm in Trinity Bay and messages passed between Great Britain and Newfoundland for a few weeks before the line failed. This caused a loss of confidence and a new attempt was not made for seven years. Success was at last achieved in 1866, when a cable was laid between Hearts Content and Valencia in Ireland.

This success was quickly followed by Newfoundland becoming a major relay station to the North American mainland.



ANNO DECIMO SEPTIMO

VICTORIÆ REGINÆ.

CAP. II.

AN ACT to Incorporate a Company under the style and title of "The New York, Newfoundland, and London Telegraph Company."

[Passed 10th April, 1854.]

Preamble.

WHEREAS it is deemed advisable to establish a Line of Telegraphic Communication between America and Europe, by way of Newfoundland: and whereas the Parties hereinafter named have associated for the purpose of forming a Company with Capital or Joint Stock of Three Hundred and Twelve Thousand Five Hundred Pounds, Sterling, or One Million Five Hundred Thousand Dollars, with the privilege of extending it, as hereinafter provided.

Be it therefore enacted by the Governor, Council, and Assembly, in Legislative Session convened, as follows:

Peter Cooper and other Shareholders created a corporation by the name of the "New York, Newfoundland, and London Telegraph Company."

I.—That Peter Cooper, Moses Taylor, Cyrus W. Field, Marshall O. Roberts, Chandler White, Frederic R. Gisborne, and all other Persons who shall, pursuant to this Act, become Proprietors of Shares for the purpose of establishing a Company to carry into effect the provisions of this Act, and their Successors and Assigns, shall be, and they are hereby created, a Body Corporate and Politic, by the name of the New York, Newfoundland, and London Telegraph Company, and by that name may have a common seal, and may alter and break the same, and may hold lands, tenements, and hereditaments, goods, chattels, and things in action, and let, sell, assign and convey the same, or any part thereof, and do all other acts or things within the scope or for the purposes contemplated by this Act, which Corporations may of right do.

Capital, Fifteen hundred thousand Dollars in shares of one hundred dollars each.

II.—The Capital or Joint Stock of the said Company shall consist of the said Sum of Fifteen Hundred Thousand Dollars in Shares of One Hundred Dollars each, with the privilege to the said Company, by resolution of the Board of Directors, to increase hereafter the Capital Stock from time to time; but not to an amount exceeding Three Millions of

The document is the first contract for the laying of a transatlantic cable.

This is the first telegraph station set up in Newfoundland in 1858 in Trinity Bay.

Wireless

Marconi had received considerable help from the British Post Office, in particular Mr Preece, the Chief Engineer, in his attempts to develop wireless. However, by 1900 he was once more independent, and conscious of the need to prove the viability of his invention by a well chosen demonstration.

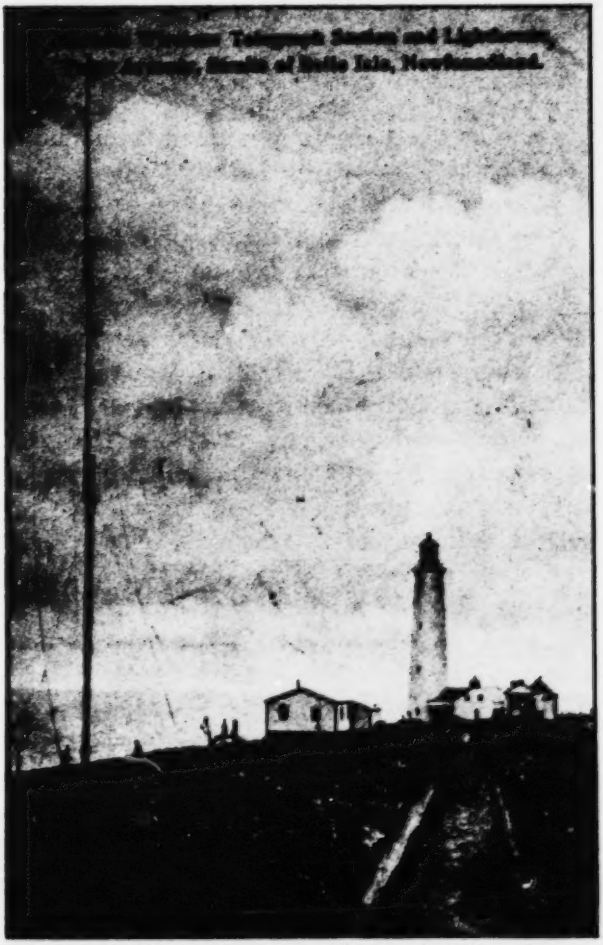
He came to Newfoundland eager to set up a receiving station for a trans-atlantic transmission from Poldhu in Cornwall in 1901.

The station was make-shift, and sited in the old barracks on Signal Hill. The attempt was held during the winter, when the signal was thought to be clearer, but heavy winds led to the first aerials being swept away. Finally, a kite was anchored securely and a telegram sent to Cornwall instructing them to start the simple morse clicks of the letter 'S'. Because the wind forced the kite up and down, making receiving difficult, the signal was not picked up for half an hour. However, at 12 noon on Saturday 14 December 1901, Marconi successfully transmitted a signal across the Atlantic.

Marconi's stay in Newfoundland was brief since the telegraph companies would not let him transmit messages from a permanent site at competitive rates. He left for Nova Scotia where the Government was keen to start up a wireless service.

This setback for wireless telegraphy in Newfoundland was short, as shore wireless stations were soon built to communicate with ships off the coast, and subsequently to link small isolated settlements with the telephone and telegraph system.

In 1938 a radio telephone link was begun between Newfoundland and Great Britain, and by 1939 there was a substantial telephone service on the island.



This postcard of about 1910 shows one of a series of wireless stations around the coasts of Newfoundland and Labrador

Transatlantic Mail

Although Newfoundland was always regarded as Britain's 'oldest colony', there was no direct regular communication link until 1859 when the 'Galway' line established a short-lived service.

The Post Office first thought of a direct link in the early 18th century, as Newfoundland was regarded as good trans-atlantic terminal for British North America. This came to nothing as, legally, Newfoundland was not a colony, and therefore could not be treated as one. However, the legal restrictions were breaking down by 1789, when it was recommended that, in the interests of the valuable fishing trade, a direct summer postal service should be established with Newfoundland. This came to nought as the postal costs exceeded expected income, and the letter rate would be greater than the private rate on merchant ships.

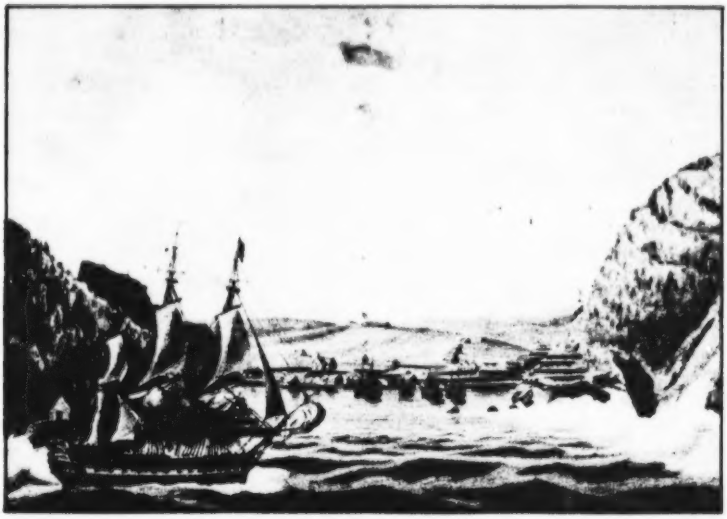
The lack of regular overseas mail did not stop the development of a packet service around Conception Bay from about 1765. When an internal Post Office was sanctioned in 1805, the mail was collectd by Solomon the Postmaster and handed out to the Packet Masters for delivery.

This postal service was extended in the 1840's to cover some of the outlying bays, and the nucleus of the network set-up by the Postal Act of 1851 was in place by 1850.

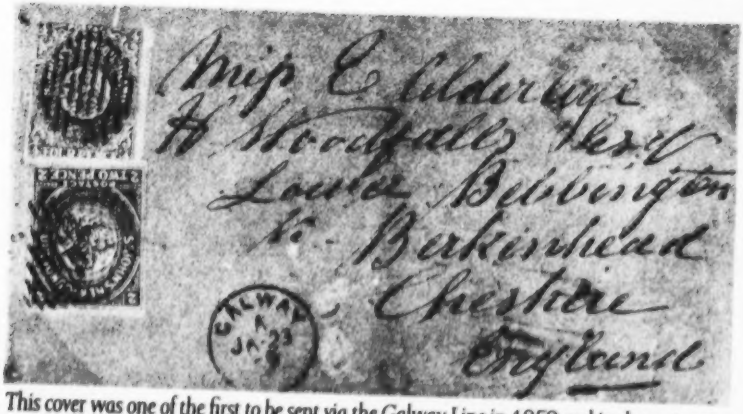
Further requests by the Newfoundland Governor and interested parties for a mail service in 1826 failed, and it was not until 1840, when Newfoundlandland entered the Colonial postal system, that a regular service was established by Cunard between Liverpool and Halifax, with a local connection by a Mr Tobin to St Johns.

In 1844 steam ships started between Halifax and St Johns; and regular inter-American communication began.

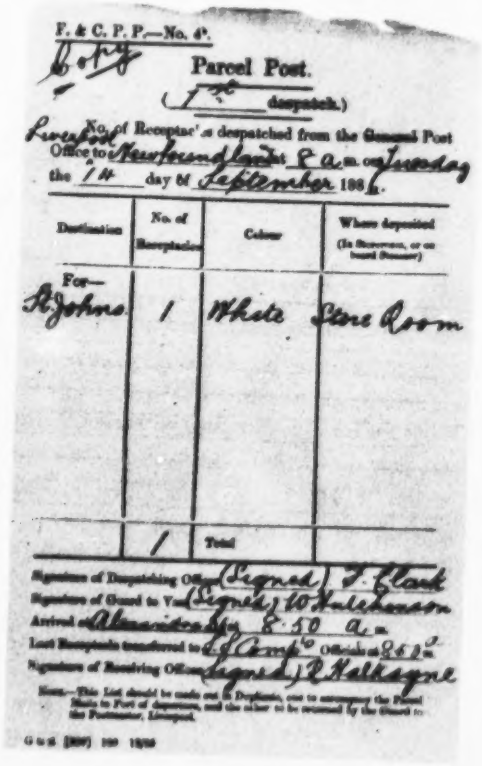
In 1856 two attempts by different Companies to establish a direct mail service to Newfoundland failed. In 1857 began the first of the 'Galway' line's trips across the Atlantic in preparation for a mail contract which was finally approved in 1859. Unfortunately, the Line failed in 1861, and again in 1864, and a direct link was not restored until a summer service began in 1873.



The British warship is approaching St Johns around 1800. It had to resupply the permanent garrison protecting the harbour against the French. St Johns was still only very small and fishing stages rather than businesses prevailed.



This cover was one of the first to be sent via the Galway Line in 1859 and is also unique in having the only reorded combinations of scarlet-vermilions on cover. It carries the current 6d rate to England.



F. & C. P. P.—No. 4.

Parcel Post.

(1st despatch.)

No. of Receptacles despatched from the General Post Office to Newfoundland at 8 a.m. on Tuesday the 14 day of September 1886.

Destination	No. of Receptacles	Colour	Where deposited (In Storeroom, or on board Steamer)
For— St Johns	1	White	Store Room
	1	Total	

Signature of Despatching Officer (Signed) T. Clark

Signature of Guard to Vessel (Signed) W Hutchinson

Arrival at Almeria Dock 8.50 a.m.

Last Receptacle transferred to H.M. Comp.y Officials at 8.52 a.m.

Signature of Receiving Officer (Signed) J Halhagne

Note.—This List should be made out in Duplicate, one to accompany the Parcel Mails to Port of destination, and the other to be retained by the Guard for the Postmaster, Liverpool.

G & S. [300] 100 1/86

The document comes from the first parcel post dispatched to Newfoundland in 1886.

Air Mails

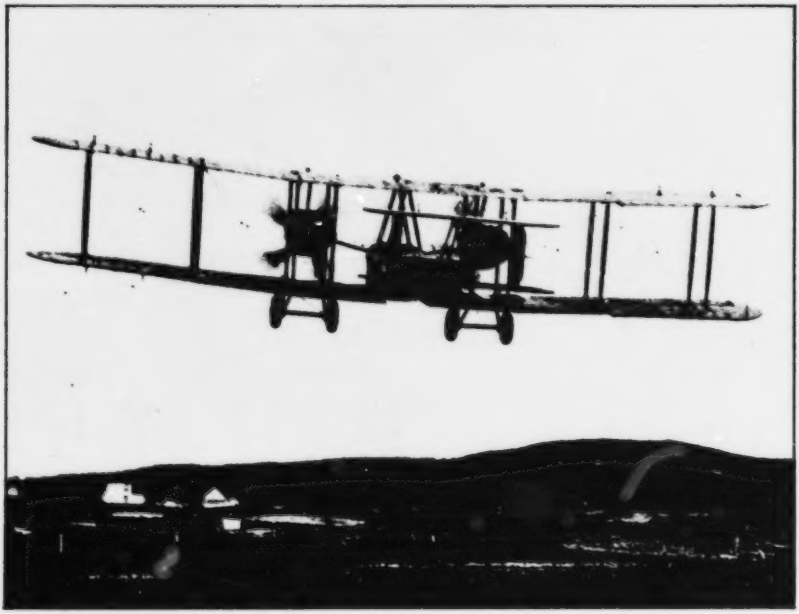
There was a long-standing prize offered by the Daily Mail of £10,000 to the first person who flew the Atlantic non-stop, but it was not until after World War I that flyers seriously undertook the challenge.

In 1919 a number of aircraft were shipped to Newfoundland to make the attempt. The four most serious contenders were:-
The Martinsyde (Raynham and Morgan)
The Sopwith (Hawker and Grieve)
The Vickers-Vimy (Alcock and Brown)
The Handley Page (Kerr, Brackley, and Grau).

A rush was on to reassemble and test them to be the first in the air. Two days before the first flights, the Americans successfully crossed the Atlantic, but since the feat had been done in stages, via the Azores, the non-stop crossing had still to be achieved.

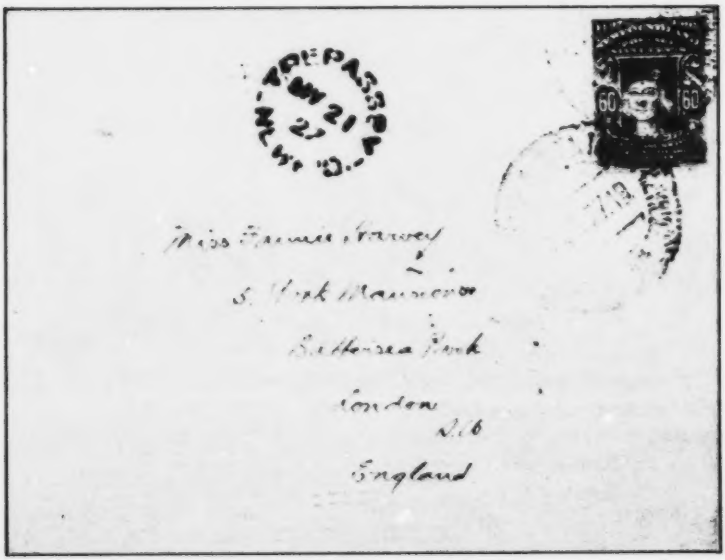
The success of the Vickers-Vimy proved that large planes could make trans-atlantic flights, but this was of little benefit to Newfoundland as attention transferred to Canada and America. As far as international flights were concerned, Newfoundland became a staging-post, and although many eminent flyers passed through, or over, Newfoundland lost its premier trans-atlantic status. What remained was the desire by the Post Office, and the Government, to establish an air service in Newfoundland. This began in 1921, but regular flights did not start until 1930.

The first trial trans-atlantic sea planes reached Newfoundland in 1936. No regular service began before the war, but once hostilities occurred Newfoundland became an important link in Anglo/US trade. Two airports were built, at Goose and Gander. Regular passenger flights began after the war.

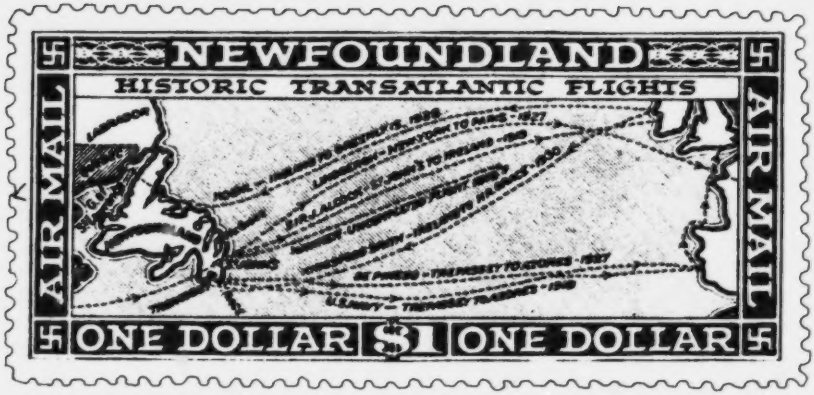


A Vickers Vimy taking off in Newfoundland for the Transatlantic flight

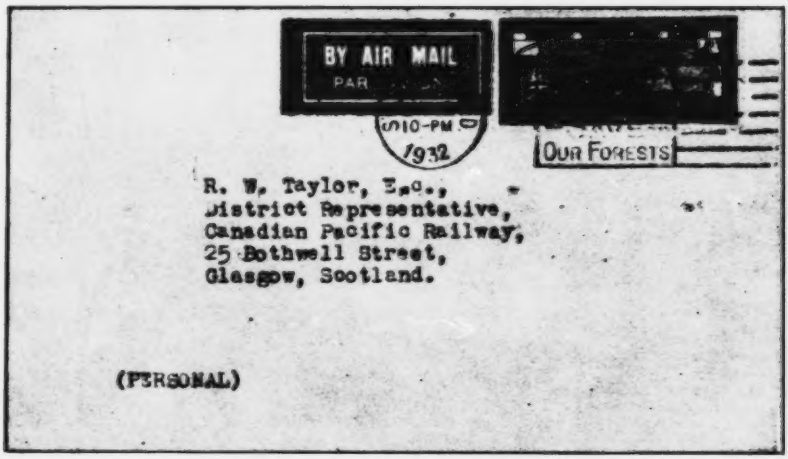
This stamp was issued to coincide with the first organised Newfoundland flights. These were not very successful but acted as good experimental flights for a later service.



In 1927 De Pinedo, an Italian, flew from New Brunswick to Trepassy, Newfoundland in preparation for a transatlantic attempt. A special stamp was issued but the plane did not make Lisbon in a single flight.



The first airmail stamp was issued in 1931 and records the aerial exploits of a number of flyers. It was first used on the DO-X flight to Berlin.



The DO-X flight took place in 1932 and a S1·50 stamp was issued. The plane flew from Holyrood to Vigo, Southampton and Berlin.

In 1933 General Balbo, flew anarmada of sea planes round the Atlantic, and stopped in Newfoundland. A S4-50 stamp was issued and the flight to Italy was a success.

Issued with the Post Office Circular of the 22nd of June, 1939

NORTH ATLANTIC AIR MAIL SERVICE

With reference to the notice under the above heading which appeared on page 265 of the Post Office Circular of the 31st of May, it should be noted that, commencing on Wednesday, the 28th of June, a United States Transatlantic air service will be operated on the direct route Southampton–Botwood (Newfoundland)–Shediac (New Brunswick, Canada)–New York, in addition to the service via Marseilles and the Azores.

The arrangements already applicable to the route via Marseilles will apply equally to the Southampton–Botwood–Shediac–New York route, that is to say, correspondence intended for transmission by either of the two routes must be prepaid at the rates shown below. A blue air mail label must be affixed to the top left hand corner of the envelope, **which should also be superscribed "North Atlantic air service."**

	Letters per half ounce s. d.	Postcards s. d.
United States of America } Canada } Newfoundland ...	1 3	7
Azores (via Marseilles only)	6	3
Bahamas	1 6	10
Bermuda, Cuba and Jamaica	1 9	11
Bolivia, Brazil and Chile	3 6	1 7
British Guiana, Colombia, Dutch Guiana, Dutch West Indies (Curaçao, Aruba and Bonaire), Ecuador, French Guiana, Peru and Venezuela	2 9	1 4
British Honduras, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Hayti, Honduras Republic, Leeward Islands (Antigua), Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Porto Rico and Trinidad ...	2 0	1 0
Sandwich Islands	2 6	1 2

The rate for the Azores covers air transmission to the Azores; the rates for the other destinations cover air transmission to North America and thence by any available air mail service to destination.

The latest time of posting at the Head Post Office, London, E.C.1, for the service of the 28th of June and, in the absence of further notice, for subsequent services will be as follows —

Latest time of posting at Head Post Office, London, E.C.1	Route.	Aircraft due to reach New York
*7.30 a.m. Wednesday, 28 June ...	Direct	Thursday, 29 June
*7.30 a.m. Saturday, 1 July ...	via Marseilles	Tuesday, 4 July
7.30 a.m. Saturday, 8 July ...	via Marseilles	Tuesday, 11 July
*7.30 a.m. Wednesday, 12 July ...	Direct	Thursday, 13 July
*7.30 a.m. Saturday, 15 July ...	via Marseilles	Tuesday, 18 July
7.30 a.m. Saturday, 22 July ...	via Marseilles	Tuesday, 25 July
*7.30 a.m. Wednesday, 26 July ...	Direct	Thursday, 27 July

and thereafter 7.30 a.m. every Saturday (via Marseilles) and 7.30 a.m. every Wednesday (direct) until further notice

The latest times of posting at provincial Head Offices will be the standard times for London Outport already indicated in the I. and F. Circulation Record (R 201) and the Counter Mail Lists (P 7746) corresponding to a 7.30 a.m. posting at the Head Post Office, London, E.C.1.

Correspondence for the Azores will be despatched only by the services leaving via Marseilles on Saturdays; that for Newfoundland will be despatched by the services against which the sign * appears in the above list and thereafter only by the direct service leaving on Wednesdays; and that for Canada, U.S.A. and countries beyond will be despatched by all the services.

It is important that ALL correspondence intended for transmission by the North Atlantic air service should be circulated to, or as for, London, E.C.1.

The air mail services to America at present shown in the Air Mail leaflet will still be available and no alteration should be made in the circulation of air mail correspondence intended for transmission by these services.

A copy of this supplement should be placed with working copies of the Air Mail leaflet.

In 1936 trial flights for a transatlantic service had started but not until 1939 could the Post Office advertise a regular air mail flight.

The Post Grows

The depression of the 1860's convinced the Government that it was necessary to diversify the economy. With the return of prosperity in the 1870's various measures were taken to extend public works on roads, bridges, telegraphs, telephones, harbours, etc; and to encourage the exploitation of mineral reserves, forests and the land. Improvements continued until 1920 and the Post Office was one of the beneficiaries.

After the recession of the 1860's, the network of coastal steamers expanded greatly. These were normally on contract from shipping companies and provided a fast an efficient service. This service did much to break the isolation of the South and West Coast, and in time, came to be regarded more as a vital social service than purely as a mail and passenger boat.

The increase in the coastal network was part of a greater Government policy to open-up the wealth of the country, to create and help jobs and industry, and to improve the way of life of countless isolated communities. In time, they succeeded, helped by the general improvements in Newfoundland's trading position, the good fishing, and the new mining and forestry industries.

The couriers had operated privately since the 1750's, but the 1851 Act organised the routes and paid a contract price. By 1870 a 210 mile road between St Johns and Gander Bay had been completed, and ten couriers worked the route. By 1882 the west coast was also served between Bonne Bay and Griquet. Most of the courier routes were extremely difficult and had to be

negotiated on foot or by using dog sleighs or light-weight canoes. As steamer routes extended, the couriers were used increasingly for the Northern areas, where harbours iced up during the winter, and where only they could operate the mail.

A Railway had been envisaged since the 1840's, but firm plans did not come about until the 1880's. Initially, the railway was to be from St Johns to Halls Bay, but financial difficulties in 1884 forced it to be curtailed at Harbour Grace. Mail was first carried in 1885 on this route. Trains were running to Holyrood, however, by 1882.

It was not until 1889 that the political will to build a network of lines was forthcoming. R. G. Reid won a contract to build the line to Halls Bay, but by 1893 it was apparent that this town was a dead-end, and the line was extended to Port-aux-Basques.

The railway was prohibitively expensive, and financial chaos ensued in 1893. The government was burdened with huge debts and the prospect of greater ones when the line was operational.

In 1898 the railway was finished, but the promised economic boom associated with the railways did not occur. Indeed, some large industries did without the railroad completely.

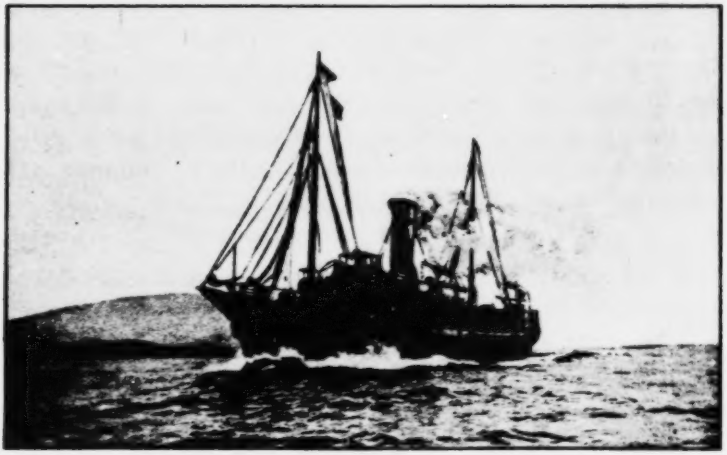
A controversial deal was struck between Reid and the Government, whereby Reid would buy the railroad and run it for 50 years. He also took charge of most of the other communications on the Island. This allowed Reid the scope to develop many schemes, one of which was the repositioning and rebuilding of the St Johns Station.

The next Government demanded the return of the sold services and a bitter battle was fought between Reid supporters and the Government, which ended with a revised contract for the railways and the return of the telegraphs.

The railway was still a financial liability and was the major cause of the huge debt problems in the 1920's and 30's. The debt was further enlarged by a series of branch lines. Some of the lines were never built, many were closed down. The reasons for building were political rather than economic.

On most of these lines, a T.P.O. (Travelling Post Office) mail service was run.

The mounting debts, extra branch lines and the rundown of infrastucture due to the war, led Reid to shut down the system pending a Government take-over in 1923. The Government spent over $8 million on improvements, but had to scrap some branch lines together with their T.P.Os. By 1931 the railway had cost the country $45 million (or half the national debt). However, the railway had ended the isolation of communities and the economic dependence on fishing, and had provided jobs, mobility, and unity.



The S.S. 'Bruce' shown above carried the mail between Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, and was owned and run by the Reid Company in about 1900.

Shown above is a Postcard of the Holyrood section of the railway.

This postcard of the St Johns Post Office dates from about 1901. The Office was built in 1886 but even by the 1900's had become too small to meet the rapid growth of postal business.

The 20th century Posts

Despite it's railway debts, the Newfoundland economy was still in reasonable shape in 1914. She had diversified her industries and created jobs and services as never before.

Four years of war later, and these hopes had dimmed. Despite a short-term boom of surpluses and investment, the war had extended the Nation's resources to the utmost, and many of her young men, the hopes for the future, had been killed or wounded.

After the war the huge costs of the conflict, the depreciation of industry, the continuing debt, and the collapse of overseas markets led to social and financial problems. The country slid into a deficit of $60m. This, and the rising cost of unemployment, left the Nation in a perilous state to face the onset of the world depression.

The Post Office was not unaffected by these problems. Following the War, the initial excitement of the first Atlantic crossing by plane in 1919, and a telephone and wireless service beyong St Johns, did not last. The Post Office was forced to cut back like everyone else. In the crisis of 1932-4 the valuable stamp collection in the Post Office was sold to raise money to pay debts, and the Newfoundland Museum was dispersed to make room for the Commission.

Continual borrowing and the collapse of the fish price put the country near bankruptcy. A default on the interest was rejected, because the effect might cause further and greater problems. The delaying of the default was only successful

because Britain and Canada forced the Banks to reschedule their debt. The situation worsened, people began to starve and corruption was again a problem. A riot led to a general election in 1932, which was won on the promise of a Royal Commission on Newfoundland affairs.

In 1933 the Commission was appointed. This recommended a Commission of Government, run from Britain, which was agreed in February 1934. The Commission was to last for 15 years.

The Commission was not conspicuously successful, but it did stave off bankruptcy and, after a few years, the Post Office was able to consider renewed investment, especially in the coastal service. Regular Air Mail flights within Newfoundland were tried out, and B.O.A.C. made trial flights from England.

The King and Queen visited Newfoundland in 1939.

The Second World War gave Newfoundland's economy a necessary boost, but once again the fragile state of much of industry meant a massive re-investment beyong the capabilities of the Nation. Financial problems, a national distain for the increasingly ineffectual Commission and promises of a better life induced Newfoundland to accept union with Canada in 1949.

In 1939 Newfoundland was visited by the King and Queen.

In 1949 Newfoundland joined the Canadian Confederation – a cover was issued to mark the event.

Labrador

Labrador, perhaps the earliest known part of the American Continent, was one of the last areas to be settled and administered by Europeans. The 1000 mile coast has belonged to Newfoundland since 1809, but various international treaties extended the inland area enormously. The interior of Labrador was inhabited by semi-nomadic Indians and Eskimoes, who traded with Europeans but were fiercely hostile to any settlements.

Despite the harsh climate and unfriendly peoples, the rich fishing grounds attracted American, French, English and Newfoundland fishermen, and traders. These early fishing expeditions treated the Eskimoes appallingly and, but for the efforts of the Moravian Missionaries, they could have been wiped out.

The Missionaries established various settlements on the coast. in order to care for, trade with, and convert the Indians and Eskimoes. The first such settlement was unsuccessful, but in 1763, one began at Nain. Other missions were set up at Hopedale and Makkovik.

Gradually the permanent population spread along the coast following the fishermen. Various trading stations appeared, like Battle Harbour.

Despite a growing population in Labrador the Newfoundland Government failed to perform most of its duties, and left social and welfare care to the Missions and Charities. One of the most famous was the Grenfall Association of Hospitals at Battle Harbour and Indian Harbour.

It was not until 1946 that the 'Liveyers' or Labradorians got the vote and only World War II produced the incentives to develop the interior of the country.

During the 1860's the Government of Newfoundland extended the mail and passenger steamer routes to Labrador. A service as far as Adlavik and Mannocks Harbour was operating by 1870. In the winter, when the coast was icebound, dog teams and reindeer were employed to transport the mail. Battle Harbour became a major starting point for the Northern Mails, and Main the terminus. Later, the boat went as far as Cape Chindley.

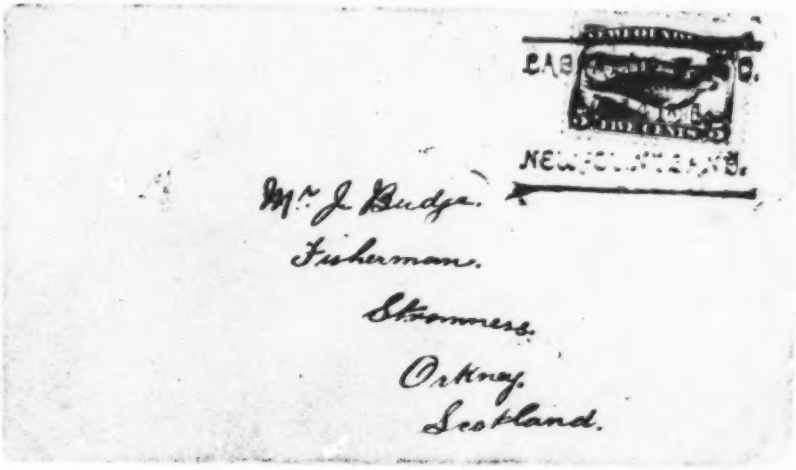
The Hopedale Mission station was one of the ports of call for the summer mail boats, but the only post office was on board the ship, as the service was really to help the seasonal fisherman. The Missions ran a place where stamps could be bought, and where letters could be posted. During the winter the Missions organised their own mail service using dog teams because the Post Office couriers were infrequent.

Because communications were uncertain during the winter, the Post Office decided in 1921 to fly mail to collection points in Labrador using the frozen harbours as runways, and the aeroplanes of a gold prospecting company.

In 1933 gold concessions were sold in Labrador by the Newfoundland Government. A Post Office was opened at Wabush-Katsao to serve the gold mining companies and mail was taken by rail and boat to Seven Islands Quebec, to be flown to the area of operations. Irregular flights continued to and from Labrador, mostly to the fishing fleets, but occasionally to the new inland towns.

The interior of Labrador, which had finally been awarded to Newfoundland in 1925, was beginning to be exploited for minerals and timber, and large settlements were growing-up inland.

From 1940 Labrador developed with a rush: a new airport, military bases and mining and timber for the war effort. By 1949 the basis for a diverse economy had been laid and a more assured way of life had arrived for the Liveyers.



This rare cover with magenta handstamp was sent from Labrador in 1896.

The author and the National Postal Museum would like to thank the Post Office Archives, the Public Archives of Canada, the Newfoundland Archives and the many individuals who assisted in the production of this booklet.